



IMPORTANCE OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological Awareness is the ability to identifying and manipulating the sounds in speech. Children who are proficient in this area can:

- Identify and produce rhyming words (e.g., cat, mat, hat)
- Break words into syllables (e.g., den-tist)
- Identify the beginning, middle and end sounds in words
- Break words into individual sound units or phonemes (e.g., d-e-n-t-i-s-t)
- Blend individual phonemes back into words (e.g., /b/-/a/-/t/ = bat)
- Delete phonemes (e.g., take the /l/ out of 'clap' to make 'cap')
- Substitute one phoneme for another to produce a different word (e.g., change the /a/ in 'cat' to /o/ to make 'cot').

Most children begin to demonstrate some level of phonological awareness around the age of three and this awareness usually increases rapidly over the next two years (Dodd & Gillon, 2001). Phonological awareness skills develop in a similar, predictable pattern across all languages. Children are first aware of larger sound units and over time become increasingly aware of smaller and smaller units of sound (that is from words, to syllables to phonemes). Similarly, children are able to detect similar or dissimilar sounds before they mastered the ability to manipulate sounds (e.g., deletion, blending, segmenting).

The development of phonological awareness is closely tied to overall language and speech development. More importantly, phonological awareness is closely linked to literacy development. Research shows that the phonological awareness of pre-school children is the most powerful predictor of future success in learning to read and spell Heath & Hogben 2004). In addition, it has been found that 90% of students with poor literacy skills have poor phonological awareness and auditory processing skills (Metsala, Stanovich, & Brown, 1998). Similarly, children with poor communications skills (Boudreau & Hedberg, 1999) and speech disorders (Rvachew, Ohberg, Grawberg & Heyding, 2003) often have poor phonological awareness.

However, phonological awareness and auditory processing skills can be improved through intervention. See the [Cracking the ABC Code Sound Hearing Book](#) for ideas. You can check your child's phonological awareness and auditory processing skills using the [Cracking the ABC Code Phonological Awareness & Auditory Processing Test](#) which can be freely downloaded from the website www.crackingtheabccode.com . If you have any concerns regarding the development of your child's phonological awareness and auditory processing

skills, you should have your child's hearing checked and make an appointment to see a speech pathologist.

References

Boudreau, D., & Hedberg, N. (1999). A comparison of early literacy skills in children with specific language impairment and their typically developing peers. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 8, 249–260.

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Metsala, J., Stanovich, K., & Brown, G. (1998). Regularity effects and the phonological deficit model of reading disabilities: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 90, 279-294